

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A biologically pure culture of a microorganism belonging to the genus *Rhodococcus* and having the ability to degrade urethane bonds, or a mutant strain thereof, wherein the microorganism is *Rhodococcus equi* strain TB-60-DMZ 16175.

2-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A method for degrading a urethane compound, which comprises the step of bringing the urethane compound into contact with the microorganism according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1.

5. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein the urethane compound is a compound used as a source material for polyurethane production.

6. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein the urethane compound is a polyurethane.

7. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A method for degrading a polyurethane, which comprises the steps of:

bringing the polyurethane into contact with the microorganism according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1; and

bringing the polyurethane into contact with a microorganism having the ability to degrade ester bonds in the polyurethane.

8. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 7, wherein the microorganism having the ability to degrade ester bonds in the polyurethane is *Paenibacillus amylolyticus* strain TB-13 or *Comamonas acidovorans* strain TB-35.

9. (Previously Presented) The biologically pure culture according to claim 1, wherein said urethane bonds are polyurethane bonds.

10. (Currently Amended) A biologically pure culture of *Rhodococcus equi* strain TB-60-DMZ 16175 which has the ability to degrade polyurethane bonds, or a mutant strain thereof, which has the ability to degrade polyurethane bonds.